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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NASSAU 000332

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SUBJECT: BAHAMIAN FOREIGN MINISTER EQUATES ISRAEL WITH  
WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Robert M. Witajewski, Reasons 1.  
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#### SUMMARY

1. (C) Visiting non-resident Israeli Ambassador David Dadonn was not given a meeting with Bahamian Prime Minister Perry G. Christie during his current visit to Nassau. Ambassador Dadonn also reported that his first meeting with Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell ended abruptly after five minutes after FM Mitchell equated Israeli actions in Palestine with white South Africans racist policies opposing black majority rule in that country. Mitchell later sent a message to Dadonn that he "regretted" his statements. Dadonn also reported that he believed that Caricom had already made a decision not to support the candidacy of former Salvadoran President Francisco Flores as OAS Secretary General, although he was unsure if they could agree whether or not to vote as a bloc for either the Mexican or Chilean candidate.  
END SUMMARY.

#### Prime Minister Again Plays Hard to Get

2. (C) Visiting Israeli Ambassador David Dadonn expressed dismay to Ambassador and DCM during a private meeting prior to a dinner February 15 hosted by the Ambassador for the visiting Israeli that he had been unable to see Bahamian Prime Minister Perry Christie during his visit to The Bahamas. Ambassador Dadonn, the non-resident Israeli Ambassador, is stationed in Mexico City. A clearly frustrated Dadonn complained to the Ambassador that his meeting with the Prime Minister had been repeatedly re-scheduled and then canceled. (Dadonn's problems are similar to those encountered by former Salvadoran President Francisco Flores in scheduling his February 14-15 visit to Nassau to promote his candidacy for the OAS Secretary Generalship. Flores first encountered difficulty obtaining a meeting time with the Prime Minister. Then, while he was airborne on his way to Nassau from El Salvador, the meeting was arbitrarily moved up to start prior to his scheduled landing time. In Flores' case, however, the meeting eventually occurred and lasted about 45 minutes.)

#### Mitchell Equates Israel with White South Africa

3. (C) The focus of Ambassador Dadonn's unease, however, was his report of his February 14 meeting with Bahamian Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell. According to Dadonn, his Monday meeting with Mitchell was tense and abrupt. A "curt" FM Mitchell, related Dadonn, entered the Foreign Ministry reception room for the meeting and proceeded to equate Israeli "oppression" of the Palestinian people in the Gaza with "white South Africans oppression of the country's black majority" prior to majority rule. Dadonn told the Ambassador that he felt, at this point, no option except to abruptly end the meeting and walk out after only about five minutes.

4. (C) Apparently realizing what he had done, Ambassador Dadonn said that FM Mitchell passed a message through the Ministry's number two official, Permanent Secretary Dr. Patricia Rogers, to the Israeli Honorary Consul in The Bahamas, Ralph Seligman, that any offense that he might have conveyed was "unintended" and "regretful." Dadonn said that the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Rogers, scheduled a meeting for the following day -- one that lasted 50 minutes -- during which the Permanent Secretary said that the Minister's views had been "personal" and "did not reflect (Bahamian) Government policy."

5. (C) Asked by Dadonn for his analysis of Mitchell's behavior, the Ambassador responded that there seemed, at times, to be "two Fred Mitchell's," the polite and polished public Mitchell and the more private -- but more revealing -- Mitchell. The Ambassador agreed with Dadonn that The Bahamas had not been helpful to the U.S. in several UNGA votes this past year, citing the Sudan and anti-Israel UNGA resolutions. The Ambassador also noted that The Bahamas continued to not

be as publicly helpful on Haiti as they could be considering the massive U.S. assistance provided to The Bahamas in illegal drug and migrant interdiction.

16. (C) Ambassador Dadonn agreed that The Bahamas had not been supportive in the UNGA. He cited an example where The Bahamian PermRep in New York delayed supporting an Israeli request to petition the Secretary General for a special session to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz until after enough other countries had already submitted requests to carry the proposal. At that point, Dadonn observed dryly, "the Bahamian action was of no value."

17. (C) Asked for his analysis of the construction of a large new mosque in Nassau, Ambassador Dadonn responded that he had expressed concern about it to Bahamian officials but that they indicated that they could do nothing about its construction. (The mosque is reportedly being constructed with Saudi government funds.) Dadonn promised to forward any additional information about the mosque, its programs, or its funding that became available to him.

#### Caricom Unlikely to Support Flores

18. (C) Asked by DCM for his analysis of the OAS Secretary General race, Ambassador Dadonn said that he believed that Caricom had already taken a decision not to support former Salvadoran President Francisco Flores' candidacy. What Dadonn was unsure of, he continued, was whether Caricom at its current Heads of State meeting in Surinam could reach a positive decision about whom to support as a bloc.

#### Comment

19. (C) The Israeli Ambassador was clearly taken aback by FM Mitchell's comments equating Israel with racist South African policies. He stated that such rhetoric isn't even heard in the Arab world anymore. We note that when demarched last fall about a series of UNGA votes, FM Mitchell explained to us that The Bahamian position as one of not supporting country-specific resolutions...except in the case of Israel. Mitchell's candid outburst to the visiting Israeli Ambassador probably reflects the "real" Fred Mitchell much more than his deliberately calculated, polished "Foreign Minister" image.

ROOD